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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2009

Media Highlights: Erdogan-Basbug Discuss Secret 'Military Action Plan'; DTP at Republic Day Celebrations; Davutoglu to Northern Iraq; US Praises Turkey on Middle East; Turkey to Open Ports to Greek Cyprus

Erdogan-Basbug Discuss Secret 'Military Action Plan' against Fundamentalism

Media outlets report Prime Minister Erdogan and the Chief of the General Staff (TGS) General Ilker Basbug met twice yesterday -- at the Republic Day celebrations and later at a reception. Yesterday's meeting was the first one between Erdogan and Basbug since the revelation of a "secret military action plan" for fighting fundamentalism. In a statement posted on its website, the Prime Ministry said the "procedures regarding the action plan" are with the military prosecutor and that the process was expected to reveal the truth as soon as possible. The statement also warned that institutions should not be targeted. Mainstream Milliyet sees the statement released as an indication of "softening."

Editorials on Secret Military "Action Plan"

Hasan Cemal commented in mainstream Milliyet: "If the Turkish military doesn't want to wear itself out any longer, then it needs to change itself to fit within the framework of democracy and the rule of law."

Cengiz Candar wrote in liberal Radikal: "If the Turkish General Staff (TGS) resists being open to review, Turkey will never reach full democracy. The TGS has lost its credibility and the day has come for an investigation by a civil court. This is a must for Turkey's future."

Mehmet Ali Kislali questioned in Radikal whether protecting the republic against religious fundamentalism is the Turkish military's main duty or not. If it is, shouldn't everyone be careful in accusing the TGS of committing a crime by preparing an "action plan?"

Huseyin Gulerce wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "The Turkish military has a junta support staff in its structure, a betrayal of democracy. The TGS, which is the Turkish public's most trusted

institution, should definitely clear out junta members. Turkey will never manage to resolve its problems until this lot is kicked out of the TGS."

Kurdish DTP Joins Republic Day Celebrations

Mainstream Sabah says Republic Day celebrations became a platform for a "softening" with the DTP officials participating in the celebrations held yesterday. Lawmakers from DTP, CHP and AK Party celebrated the Republican Day in Kurdish, says Sabah. Papers report Diyarbakir's Kurdish Mayor Osman Baydemir shook hands with generals in the city. Sabah says that Turkey has been longing for this for a long time, whereas mainstream Aksam says army commanders have recognized the DTP. Mainstream Vatan comments the DTP members who incurred fierce criticism over their greeting of the PKK groups returning to Turkey sent the message that they were respecting national values.

First Turkish Ministerial Visit to Northern Iraq

Papers report that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and State Minister Foreign Trade Zafer Caglayan, accompanied by 70 businessmen, will travel to northern Iraq to meet the representatives of the Kurdish regional administration and open a Turkish consulate in the cities of Basra and Mosul. Papers note the visit would be the first at the ministerial level to northern Iraq. The Turkish delegation will also visit Erbil and meet with the KRG President Massoud Barzani. Islamist-oriented Zaman quotes Barham Saleh, the PM of the regional administration of northern Iraq, as saying that the visit of the Turkish ministers would be an "historic event." Mainstream Sabah and leftist Taraf say that in Erbil Davutoglu is going to raise with Barzani the return of the PKK

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members to Turkey.

"US Praises Turkey on Middle East" (Cumhuriyet)

Islamist-oriented Zaman, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet, mainstream Milliyet and other papers report that Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feltman told a US House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing that "Turkey plays a very positive role in contributing to stability in Iraq." Feltman noted that Turkey has "encouraged dialogue between Israel and Syria." "We are concerned about the reasons that led to the cancellation of the Anatolian Eagle military exercises," Feltman is quoted as saying. "The US Praises Turkey on the Middle East," and "The US Praises Turkey's Role in the Region," read two headlines in Cumhuriyet and Zaman respectively.

Turkey to Open Its Ports and Airports to Greek Cyprus (Milliyet)

Mainstream Milliyet carries a report broadcast by the all-news television NTV that Turkey, preparing for a new move on Cyprus, would open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and planes in exchange for approval of direct trade between the EU and Turkish Cyprus and direct international flights to the Turkish north of the divided island.

Editorials on Nukes in Incirlik Airbase, Iran

Sedat Ergin in mainstream Hurriyet questions whether PM Erdogan is against the nukes at Incirlik airbase. Ergin writes "there is an important point we should not forget. When Erdogan says "countries against Iran's nuclear program should not have nuclear weapons themselves", he challenges not only the US and Israel, but also NATO's nuclear policies. Turkey always defended NATO's defense doctrine based on nuclear weapons. Within this framework, Turkey always considered US nuclear power an important part of NATO's and therefore Turkey's national security. For these reasons, Turkey has allowed the US for many years to have nuclear warheads at Incirlik air base. Erdogan's words contradict NATO policies. In the long run, this might have an impact on Western perceptions of Erdogan."

Erdal Safak in mainstream Sabah accompanied the PM to Pakistan and Iran and he assesses his visit to Iran by saying "hopefully, the Western world will stop their threats against Iran and leave them alone. Iran may not have a revolution but is advancing speedily towards evolution. Trust me, a modern, powerful, proud and wealthy Iran is about to be born."

Upcoming events:

Q October 30: President Gul and Turkish Cyprus leader Talat will meet, to be followed by a joint press conference.
Q October 30: Erdogan-Talat hold talks.
Q October 31: Civic organizations will rally in Istanbul to protest plots for toppling the AKP government.
Q October 31: Center-right parties Anavatan and DP will merge at a joint convention.
Q November 8: CHP leader Deniz Baykal will visit Iraq and meet with President Talabani.

TV News (NTV)

Domestic

Q President Gul approves a bill for holding parliamentary elections every four years.
Q MHP leader Devlet Bahceli said in a circular sent to party branches the AKP government's democratic initiative was a "PKK initiative."
Q "Swine flu" kills two women in the cities of Diyarbakir and Konya.

Q Central Bank, in preparation for a possible swine flu pandemic, prints new banknotes.

World

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Q Zubeyir Aydar of the PKK leadership sends a letter to President Obama protesting the placement of the PKK leaders in the list of drug traffickers.
Q Greek Cypriot leader Christofias warns that any concessions to keep Turkey on a pro-European path could backfire and likens the EU's concessions to Ankara to the appeasement of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s.
Q Israeli Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer will visit Turkey on November 24.
Q US National Security Adviser James Jones met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to discuss reducing the nuclear arsenals of the two countries.

JEFFREY